

Catholic Social Teaching Quotes by Founders

Life and Dignity of the Human Person

St. Vincent de Paul:

May our presence and care to those most in need reflect the gentleness, esteem and dignity we see reflected in the life and work of Jesus.

We should watch over the interests of others as well as we do our own, and be careful to act on every occasion with uprightness and fidelity.

How beautiful it is to see poor people if we consider them in God and with the esteem in which Jesus Christ held them (XI:26).

St. Louise de Marillac:

Continue to serve our dear masters with great gentleness, respect, and cordiality, always seeing God in them.

At the same time be very gentle and courteous toward your poor. You know that they are our masters and that we must love them tenderly and respect them deeply. It is not enough for these maxims to be in our minds; we must bear witness to them by our gentle and charitable care (SWLM:320-321 [L.284b]).

I felt a great attraction for the holy humanity of Our Lord and I desired to honor and imitate it insofar as I was able in the person of the poor and of all my neighbors.

Mother Xavier Ross:

Be respectful to strangers; treat them with courtesy and kindness in order to draw them to God through yourself.

Call to Family, Community, and Participation

A story about family/community and the foundlings:

The large number of children led Louise to establish a place in the countryside where wet-nurses were trained to provide for these children. Parents who wanted to adopt these children had to be selected carefully and should be individuals who are known. On March 30, 1640 Louise began to compile a registry of the children who were entrusted to the care of others to be raised... The wet-nurses received a monetary payment in order to help provide for the care of these children. They were regularly visited to check on their health and the progress of their education. The Ladies or the Daughters made these visits. *From The Life of Louise de Marillac, by Elisabeth Charpy.]*

Tradition tells us: Vincent was such a wise man. As one from a poor family he would have been sensitive to things like that - he tried not to let orphans be “play mates” of the rich, because they would never be accepted as equals.

[Sr. Kathleen Wood, SCL correspondence, 8/5/21. The tradition to which Sr. Kathleen refers is that Vincent would not allow foundlings to be “adopted” by wealthy families unless he had some assurance that it was a permanent arrangement and the children would be treated as equals to their natural born children, including clothing and care, education and inheritance. There was a tendency to offer to “adopt” foundlings so that their own children would have a playmate with no intention of making them permanent members of their family.]

Community

St. Vincent de Paul:

How fortunate we are to honor the poor family of our Lord by the poverty and lowliness of our own.

Charity is the cement which binds communities to God and persons to one another.

Continue to view the affairs and doings of the neighbor in a spirit of charity; should his actions have a hundred sides, always look at the best.

May God be pleased to strengthen you and to establish great union among you; for you will be even stronger if you are all closely united (VII:473).

St. Louise de Marillac:

I beg you to love one another dearly.

Encourage one another and may your mutual good example speak louder than any words can.

Renew then, my very dear Sisters, your first fervor. Begin by a true desire to please God, recalling that His Providence...has united you so that you can help one another to grow in perfection. But in order to fulfill His holy plan, ... there must be great union among you which will lead you to show great forbearance for one another.... The mark of charity in a soul is...this ability to put up with everything.” *Letter to the Sisters at Angers, July 26 (1644), in Spiritual Writings, ed. Louise Sullivan, DC, p. 113.*

I know that you are combining all your efforts so that you may be of but one heart and one will and may thereby act only with the desire of accomplishing the will of God.

I beg you not to think of the distance between us. Rather, think of us as strongly united, incapable of ever being separated, because separation is impossible in the close union created by holy charity.

Mother Xavier Ross:

All of us change in some measure, each because of the others.

It is our inability to go farther than the surface that causes us to be so faultfinding, so unwilling to bear with the imperfections of our neighbor. Every complaint against someone else is a reflection upon our own personal [holiness] and an exposition of our self-centeredness. There are two groups in every community: the spiritual-minded and studious, and the gossips. By choice you belong to one or the other.

Self-examination can be profitable. Occasionally, it is well to sort out old feelings, old loves, old hurts, old losses; weigh them and put them in order. No good comes from closing the door and letting bitterness gather like dust or a layer of moss. To do that would be to hinder and thwart all progress. *Come North*, p 151

A letter to Sr. Irene:

Mt. St. Mary's
October 28, 1875
My Dear Little Sister Irene,

Although you have not written or even sent me your love, I am sure you will be glad to get a letter from the home you love so much. Often, have I thought of the great struggle it was for you to tear yourself from dear St. Mary's. I did not blame you in the least for feeling it so much. A submissive mind & willing heart are all God requires of us, my dear child. We may have both & yet feel a sacrifice to our hearts core. That was your case I am sure. Although, I want you to like Virginia City--& work faithfully there for the honor & glory of God—yet I never want you to like it more than the home where you made your Novitiate. It is a good sign to love home, & I hope you will never forget it.

Participation:

[Vincent and Louise] studied the problems they encountered, either when they met or through letters. They shared their opinions with each other and took responsibility for resolving these issues. Their complementarity is obvious. Vincent considered Louise to be his collaborator, and in his letters, he no longer addressed her as "my dear daughter." This term more appropriately described the relationship of a [spiritual] director with a [spiritual] directee. By now using the term "Mademoiselle," Vincent recognized Louise's full participation in shaping their common mission.

Louise de Marillac: Come Winds or High Waters, p. 161.

St. Vincent de Paul

In this excerpt from a letter to Louise, Vincent acknowledged that in his haste to get things done, he had prevented Louise from having a conversation with two women before making a decision, and it would be better to speak with them first before making the decision:

"Mademoiselle [Louise], it would be good for you to communicate with Madame Goussault and Mademoiselle Poulain for their advice concerning Germaine. It is only two days ago that I paid any attention as to how we should act toward them, which it seems to me, should be with cordiality and deference; and perhaps I offended them by having you make your last decision concerning the work without saying anything to them."

St. Louise de Marillac:

I beg Our Lord, with all my heart, to bless your work and to make you realize how favored you must consider yourself because of the grace which He has given you.

Mother Xavier Ross:

Once you start a thing, see it through. Be grateful for the ability to do.

Rights and Responsibilities

St. Vincent de Paul:

If the Church's ministers are good and they do their duty, all will go well. We have all been called by God to work on a masterpiece.

I thank God for your willingness to do His Holy Will, no matter what the cost, with no regard for your own inclinations.

Education is necessary and woe betide those who don't use this time well (XI:116).

In the case of necessity, you should prefer the service of the poor to making your prayer, but, if you take care, you will find plenty of time for both.

St. Louise de Marillac:

What a good thing it is to persevere in the love and service of God.

I know, my dear Sister, that it is very difficult for us to carry out our responsibilities well, but God who has given them to us will not deny us His grace. Let us humble ourselves profoundly so as to obtain it.

Mother Xavier Ross:

Everyone has some responsibility in life, certain things have to be done at certain times or in certain places; all of us must check ourselves from time to time on how we are fulfilling these responsibilities. It isn't enough just to be at the place we are sent to; we must consider how we do the work we have been sent to do." *Come North*, p. 198

Option for People Who are Poor and Vulnerable

Excerpt from: How Vincent and Louise Challenged State-sanctioned Bias:

In fact, the era of Saint Vincent and Saint Louise was cruelly stained by explicit, state-sanctioned bias against those who were socio-economically poor. This was epitomized by the “War of the Great Confinement” which began in 1656 with a royal prohibition against all manner of public begging by the destitute poor. All forms of private almsgiving were also outlawed. Indeed, over the course of several years, more than five thousand poverty-stricken people were deprived of their freedom and forcibly contained in a series of institutions known as the General Hospital of Paris. Such actions were an explicit manifestation of sociocultural bias, enshrined in state policy and enforced by police and the judiciary.

Amidst such persecutory and punitive acts towards the poor, Vincent and Louise committed themselves to those whom French society had most abandoned and disenfranchised. Their ministry stood as humble testimony that another world was possible, a world in which the poor were honored and respected, not criminalized.

<https://blogs.depaul.edu/dmm/2021/05/17/how-vincent-and-louise-challenged-state-sanctioned-bias/>

St. Vincent de Paul:

The poor have much to teach you. You have much to learn from them.

Go to the poor; you will find God.

Charity means we can't see someone suffering without suffering along with them, or see someone cry without crying as well. This is an act of love, causing people to enter one another's hearts and to feel what they feel, far from those persons who have no feeling for the anguish of the afflicted, or the suffering of poor persons. Ah, how tenderhearted the Son of God was! They call Him to go see Lazarus! He goes ... He weeps along with them. (CCD:XII:221).

... one of the principal virtues you must possess is humility; yes, maintain great humility. Consider yourselves the least of everyone; remember that you are servants of the poor; regard them as your masters and serve them with gentleness and humility. *To Some Sisters Being Sent to the Country, Oct 22, 1650*

I can only be deeply grieved by the intense sufferings of the poor slaves and by my inability to procure some relief for them; may it please God to have pity on them (VII:523).

Let us acknowledge before God that the poor are our lords and masters and that we are unworthy of rendering them our little services (XI:349).

Be assured that it is not improper for priests of the Mission to demand justice for poor slaves so that they may be given what is being held back from them (V:398).

If you grant asylum to so many refugees, your house may be sacked sooner by the soldiers; I see that clearly. The question is, however, whether, because of this danger, you should refuse to practice such a beautiful virtue as charity.

St. Louise de Marillac:

You see a great deal of distress that you are unable to relieve. God sees it also. Bear the pains of the poor together with them, doing all you can to give them whatever help they need, and remain in peace. (also reflects principle of Solidarity)

I urge you, for the love of God to render the service you are obliged to give [people who are poor] with great gentleness and respect.

Continue to be edification to the neighbor, the consolation of the afflicted and the solace of the sick."

Mother Xavier Ross:

Your cross and your crown will be the service of the poor, and you are no daughter of St. Vincent unless you hold the poor in as high esteem as anyone in the world.

The Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers

St. Vincent de Paul:

I will always welcome joyfully any opportunity that comes my way to be of service to you.

Do not limit your vision any longer to yourself, but see the Lord around you and in you, ready to put his hand to the work as soon as you ask for help. You will see that all will go well.

Let us do our duty well.

St. Louise de Marillac: *St Louise is the Patron Saint of Social Workers.*

Is it not reasonable that since God has honored us by calling us to His service, we should serve Him in a manner pleasing to Him?

Louise herself was particularly sensitive to issues of economic justice for women. Her experience with the foster mothers program provides an illustration. The mothers needed to be paid for their services even though charitable donations had ceased and Louise had no resources. Louise wrote: "We can no longer, in good conscience, be unmoved by the plight of the foster mothers. They are asking only what is their due in recompense for their labor and for the personal money which they spend for the children. They are now faced with starvation. They sometimes have to come two or three times and each time they leave empty-handed." ... Again, it was concern for women that caused Louise to initiate hospital social work at the Hospital of Saint Denis

in Paris. This service provides the first example of a social work function within the hospital setting. Before a young girl was discharged from the hospital there, the sisters assisted her to find suitable work so that she would have a means of support and would be able to live in dignity. Discharge planning was Christian and comprehensive. Louise used the same method for applicants unable to complete the formation program to become a Daughter of Charity. She would find appropriate employment for the girls, frequently in the homes of a Lady of Charity. *Louise de Marillac: The Gentle Power of Liberation*, p. 35-36,

<https://via.library.depaul.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1069&context=vhj>

Mother Xavier Ross:

"Let your joy be in the doing and not in the end."

"Always do what is expected of you, and more, much more. Do not wait to be asked or told to do something. If there is a task to be done, do it – quickly, quietly. The feet will go to the place where the heart is. Do not boast either about doing extra work. In fact, nothing is extra. As long as it remains to be done, it is your work."

Solidarity

(We realize that the word *solidarity* was not a word used in the time of Vincent, Louise or Mother Xavier.)

A solidarity story:

The bishop of Nantes, Beauvau de Rivarennes gave his consent in 1646 and thus the Daughters of Charity began to minister at the hospital in Nantes. The bishop, however, did not understand the way of life of these servants. He asked to see the Rule and he visited their house. He did not allow them to leave their house The bishop wanted the Daughters to be like the Augustinian Sisters in the Hospital of Vannes who were cloistered and under his authority. Respectfully but energetically Vincent and Louise insisted on the fact that the Daughters were not religious but rather their convents are the houses of the sick. Their cells are the sickrooms of the poor, and even these are often rented. Their chapel is the parish church. Their cloister is the streets of the town. Their enclosure is holy obedience. Their grille is the fear of God and their veil, holy modesty. (The Life of the Venerable Servant of God Vincent de Paul, Louise Abelly, Volume II, p. 293).

St. Vincent de Paul:

It is not sufficient for me to love God if I do not love my neighbor. I belong to God and the poor.

The poor are my worry and my sorrow.

Charity is the cement that binds communities to God and persons to one another (II:413).

St. Louise de Marillac:

Be sure that you are not depriving your poor of anything. Always look to their needs so that you can give them the best you have, because it belongs to them.

Our good God knows how to knock the pride out of us.

A deep love for God in this life will be shown by practicing His goodness, gentleness and charity toward my neighbor.

Mother Xavier Ross:

Do not contradict each other, no matter how well you feel you know something. Above all, do not feel that you must give your personal opinions on every matter spoken of.

Care for God's Creation

(Care for God's Creation was not a primary concern during Vincent's/Louise's/Xavier's time as it is today.)

St. Vincent de Paul:

Since progress on your establishment is slow, you must be patient. On this Earth, things that of their nature must last longer are the ones that take the longest to develop. God be blessed for having willed all earthly things to be uncertain and perishable so that we may seek in Him alone the stability of our plans and affairs ... VI: 439

St. Louise de Marillac:

Obtaining supplies was difficult, and wheat was very expensive. Since there were many sisters to feed, as well as the children and the poor, Louise urged the sisters to watch their resources carefully: "I hope that our sister gardeners are hard at work while God is giving us beautiful weather."...The milk, eggs, and vegetables went a long way toward feeding the starving poor. Louise de Marillac: Come Winds Come Winds or High Waters, Elisabeth Charpy, DC, quoted L.259, "(To Sister Julienne Loret)," (April 1649), *ibid.*, 284.

Mother Xavier Ross:

Nothing that lives and breathes and has its appointed course under the sun can be altogether insignificant.

Anything that spoils through carelessness is extravagance.

Curb any tendency you find in yourself toward extravagance in the use of anything. Conserve light, and water, and heat.

Frequently [Mother Xavier] exclaimed, "What is more beautiful than a Kansas sunrise?" or "A Kansas sunset?" or "A Kansas landscape?" She maintained that nothing lovelier

could be found. The beauties of nature awakened a response in her, especially the ancient trees of the forest, those relics of generations long passed away. Too, she loved wild flowers planted by Him "Whose Hand perfumes and whose pencil paints." She loved the sight of a field of corn, a wheat field, cattle browsing on a green hillside, rolling hills and running streams; everything in nature gladdened her heart and evoked praise of the Almighty...

Penetrating the hazel brush, resting under grand old oak trees, and gazing in the direction of the river, Mother Xavier would say, "What a grand view!" then appear to be lost in contemplation of the scene as a part of God's wonderful creation.

Come North, p. 155-6

Sources:

1. Sr. Nancy Bauman (Thank you for your assistance gathering quotes!)
2. Life of Saint Louise de Marillac, Elisabeth Charpy.
3. Vincent de Paul and Louise de Marillac: A Single Passion for the Poor, Elisabeth Charpy, <https://cmglobal.org/en/files/2018/06/VT-2009-05-06-ENG-E.CHARPY.pdf>
4. Louise De Marillac: The Gentle Power of Liberation, Margaret J. Kelly, D.C.,
<https://via.library.depaul.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=&httpsredir=1&article=1069&context=vhj>
5. Quotes:
St Vincent de Paul: <http://vincentians.com/en/quotes-collection/vincent-paul-quotes/>
St. Louise de Marillac: <http://vincentians.com/en/quotes-collection/louise-marillac-quotes/>